

**Preliminary-Final Landmark Designation Report
Harvard Square Kiosk
0 Harvard Square, Cambridge, Mass.**



Harvard Square Kiosk, 2016

CHC photo

Summary

The Harvard Square Kiosk is significant for its architecture and method of construction, and for its associations with the suburban and commercial development of Cambridge in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is a rare and distinctive example of a specialized early twentieth-century transportation structure that has been adaptively reused for commercial purposes. The kiosk is significant for its associations with architects Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore and M.I.T. civil engineering professor Charles B. Breed. The building is also culturally significant as the central identifying structure in an area associated with Harvard University.

The Historical Commission received a petition seeking landmark designation of the kiosk in September 2016. Despite the fact that the structure was already protected by the Harvard Square Conservation District under Ch. 2.78, Art. III of the City Code, the Commission voted to initiate the requested study on November 3, 2016. The proposed designation was reviewed at public hearings on September 7 and October 5, 2017, and the Final Landmark Designation Report and recommendation was approved on [xxxxxx, xx, xxxx]

Designation of the Harvard Square Kiosk will not alter the Historical Commission's current jurisdiction over alterations to the publicly-visible exterior features of the building. Proposed alterations will still require Historical Commission issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness, Non-Applicability, or Hardship. The historical background in this report is intended to increase awareness of the history and significance of the building, while the proposed goals and guidelines will inform future decisions about alterations.

The redlined text reflects significant revisions to the draft presented at the hearing on September 7. The document will be reformatted when all revisions have been approved.

Charles Sullivan
Cambridge Historical Commission
September 29, 2017

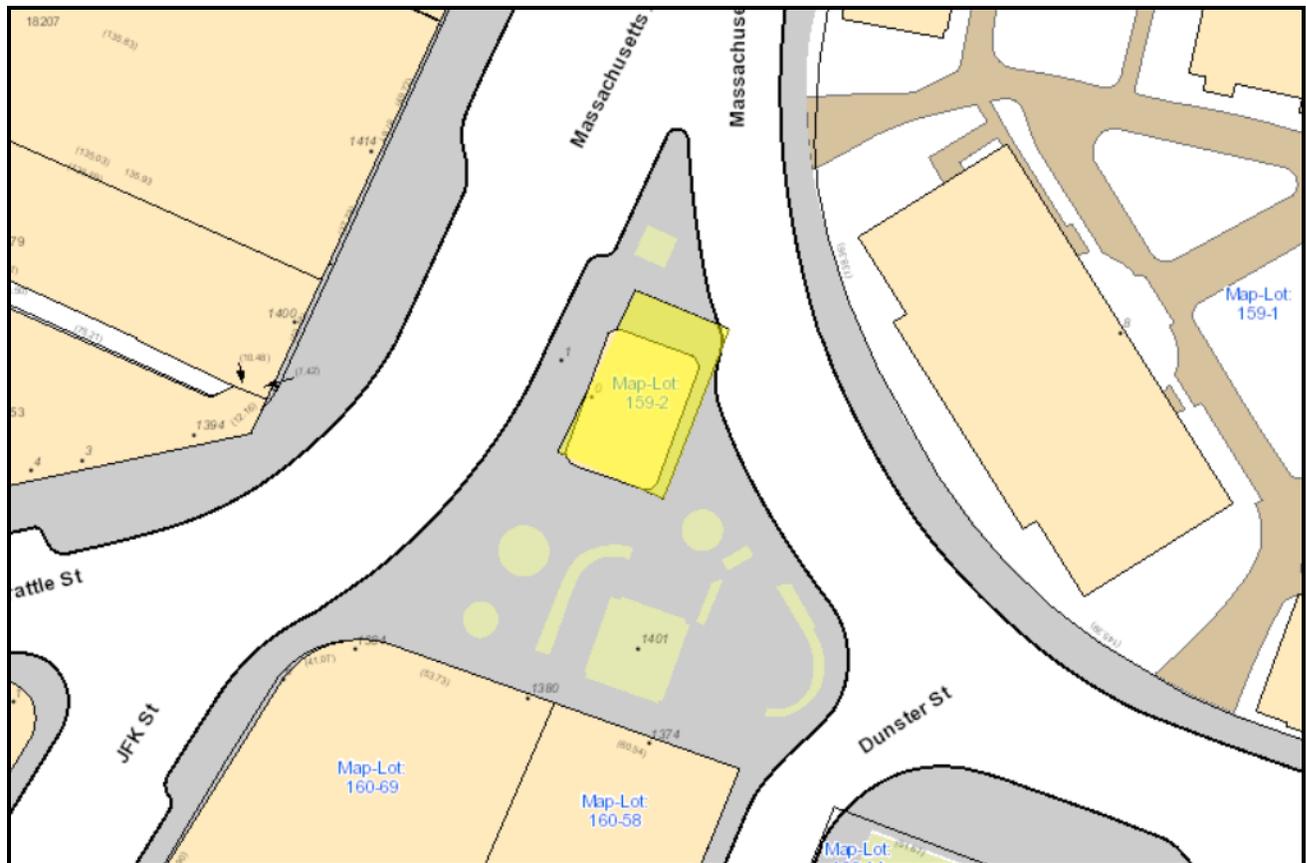
Preliminary-Final Landmark Designation Report

Harvard Square Kiosk
0 Harvard Square, Cambridge, Mass.

I. Location and Regulatory Status

A. Address and Parcel Information

The Harvard Square Kiosk is located at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, John F. Kennedy Street, and Brattle Street. It contains a single one-story brick building on a 1,350 square foot lot. The assessed value for the building (Map 159, Parcel 2), according to the current on-line real estate commitment list, is \$652,400. No value is assigned to the lot, which is owned by the City of Cambridge and surrounded on all sides by public ways.



Harvard Square Kiosk. The proposed designation includes Assessor's Map 159/Parcel 2 and an area of the plaza extending ten feet beyond the drip line of the structure's roof.
City of Cambridge GIS, August 2017

B. Ownership and Occupancy

The Harvard Square Kiosk is owned by the City of Cambridge, which took title from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority in 1983. The premises are leased to the Muckey Corporation, which operates a newsstand and does business as Out of Town News.

C. Zoning

The Harvard Square Kiosk is located in a Business BB district, in which all types of businesses, general retail, and educational, institutional, and office uses are permitted.¹ This district allows development up to a 4.0 FAR with an 80-foot height limit. The site is also governed by the Harvard Square Overlay District, which was established to achieve the following general purposes:

to augment existing zoning regulations to respond to the unique problems and pressures for change particular to the Harvard Square area. The regulations contained in said section provide for more careful public scrutiny of development proposals that may alter the established urban form of the Harvard Square area. These regulations are intended to channel the extreme development pressures in ways which will preserve and enhance the unique functional environment and visual character of Harvard Square; to mitigate the functional impacts of new development on adjacent residential neighborhoods; to maintain the present diversity of development and open space patterns and building scales and ages; and to provide sufficient regulatory flexibility to advance the general purposes of this Section 20.52. The additional flexibility granted to development within the Harvard Square Historic Overlay District is intended to facilitate the protection and enhancement of the historic resources and character of Harvard Square while not unreasonably limiting the opportunities for appropriate contemporary changes to the built environment in the Harvard Square area (Cambridge Zoning Code, §20.52).

Certain development proposals in the Overlay District are subject to a Development Consultation Procedure. In the case of the kiosk, these will probably fall into the category of a Small Project Review (§19.42). Small Project Reviews are conducted by the staff of the Community Development Department in consultation with other city agencies and must be completed within five days of receipt. Three of the enumerated potential alterations might conceivably apply to the kiosk:

(3) any exterior building alteration increasing gross floor area by one hundred (100) square feet or more; (5) erection of a sign; and (6) any other exterior building alteration facing a street but not including painting, brick repointing or masonry repairs, building cleaning, gutter replacement or similar routine repair, replacement, or maintenance

Large Project Reviews are required for new construction of 2,000 square feet or more and are conducted by the Harvard Square Advisory Committee (§19.43). Given the size of the kiosk (1,350 sq. ft.), this requirement is not likely to apply.

In the event that a special permit or variance is required, the following criteria will apply:

In reviewing applications for variances, special permits or development consultation reviews the permit or special permit granting authority or the Harvard Square Advisory Committee shall be guided by the objectives and criteria contained in the publication *Harvard Square Development Guidelines* [Document compiled from the *Guidelines for Development and His-*

¹ The table of use regulations in the Cambridge Zoning Code (§4.30) enumerates dozens of uses permitted as-of-right, by special permit, or not at all. The current use as a newsstand is a permitted use.

toric Preservation as contained in the Final Report of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee, dated November 29, 2000 and the Harvard Square Development Guidelines, 1986], in addition to the requirements of Sections 10.30 (Variances) and 10.40 (Special Permits) and this Section 20.50. These guidelines are also intended to assist in shaping any contemplated physical change within the Harvard Square Overlay District. (§20.53.2)

The Overlay District contains special provisions for buildings that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but these pertain to the inclusion of retail uses in a base residential or office district where they are not otherwise permitted.

D. Historic Preservation Status

In 1976-77 the Harvard Square Kiosk was threatened by the MBTA's proposed extension of the Red Line subway; initial plans called for its replacement with a new headhouse. The Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) nominated the kiosk to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977, and the Department of the Interior approved the listing on January 30, 1978.²

The effect of a National Register listing is that any proposed Federal- or State-funded, licensed or permitted activity affecting the kiosk must be reviewed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to determine whether the structure would be adversely affected, and if so to negotiate appropriate mitigation. National Register status has no effect on non-Federal or non-State activities. In the case of the kiosk, the MBTA quickly agreed to preserve the structure. Working with the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, its architectural consultants, the MBTA developed a plan to dismantle the structure during station reconstruction and rebuild it as a newsstand on approximately its original location. This approach was finalized in a Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the MBTA and the CHC on August 4, 1977.

The MBTA transferred ownership of the Harvard Square Kiosk and the surrounding plaza to the City of Cambridge soon after completion of the surface improvements in 1983-84. Out of Town News (OOTN), at that time owned by Sheldon Cohen, immediately occupied the property. While the OOTN's initial lease omitted any provision for further review of alterations to the building, Mr. Cohen sought CHC staff approval on several occasions. These included installation of exterior light fixtures and a metal track and fabric weather curtain in January 1990, and some alterations a few months later associated with Cohen's decision to close a theater ticket office and convert that space to additional magazine sales facilities. When Hudson News succeeded Cohen in 1994 the new lease required CHC approval of future alterations, a provision that has never been exercised.³

In 2000, the City Council designated Harvard Square as a conservation district under Ch. 2.78, Article III of the City Code. The effect of this designation means that no activity can be undertaken, and no building permit can be issued, that would affect the publicly visible exterior features of any structure in the district without prior review and approval by the Cambridge Historical Commission. The Commission's jurisdiction is subject to several exemptions, such as for storefronts, conforming signs, exterior colors, and normal maintenance activities, but in general extends to every visible aspect of a building's fabric, including walls, doors, windows, roofs, and non-conforming signs.

² The kiosk was subsumed within the Harvard Square National Register District on April 13, 1982, but maintains its individual listing.

³ In 1994 the Commission decided not to act on a citizen petition to consider landmark designation because the new lease was considered to have the same protective effect.

The CHC grants Certificates of Appropriateness for projects in the Harvard Square Conservation District that it finds to be appropriate or not incongruous. The Commission considers, “among other things, the historic and architectural value and significance of the site or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture and material of the features involved, and the relation of such features to similar features of structures in the surrounding area. In the case of new construction or additions to existing structures [the]commission shall consider the appropriateness of the size and shape of the structure both in relation to the land area upon which the structure is situated and to structures in the vicinity ...” (2.78.220). Decisions are made in the context of the “Statement of Goals and Guidelines and Standards for Review” contained in the Order establishing the District, as well as the standards and guidelines in the “Final Report of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee” dated November 29, 2000. Since 2000, the Commission has granted one certificate for the kiosk, for restoring masonry damaged in an automobile accident in 2013.

In 2014 the Community Development Department and the Harvard Square Business Association published the *Harvard Square Vision Plan* prepared by Partners for Public Spaces (PPS), a “non-profit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities” (PPS website). With regard to the kiosk, PPS recommended opening up the structure to increase its visibility, adding food and/or information services, and installing architectural lighting.

In 2015 the City Council directed the City Manager to implement the recommendations of the plan. City staff (including representatives of DPW, CDD, and CHC) began meeting to consider capital improvements for the kiosk and the plaza, reflecting a City Council appropriation of \$2.6 million in FY17 and an additional \$2 million planned for FY18. Halvorson Associates was retained to study the plaza, while architect Ted Galante prepared several conceptual designs that showed how the kiosk could be adapted as a general-purpose public space.

During this process CHC staff successfully insisted on two fundamental principles: that all original material that remained after the conversion to a newsstand in 1983 should be preserved, and that there should be no additional enclosure of the structure. After many rounds of discussion about alternatives that removed original fabric, enclosed additional space, or added features to the exterior or roof of the structure, Galante prepared a rendering these were reflected in an unofficial rendering that Galante released in the summer of 2016. This concept that represented a preservation approach in which all original building fabric would remain and be restored; it showed glass where it was historically used or where it would be needed to enclose the staircase entrances that are now occupied by magazine racks. Lighting was shown for illustrative purposes. The rendering was a conceptual scheme submitted for discussion by the city staff; it did not represent an actual design approach because the ultimate use of the building had not been determined. The architect’s release of the rendering in the summer of 2016 was not authorized by the City.



Conceptual restoration rendering

Galante Architecture Studio, 2016

City staff suspended design activities for the kiosk in late spring 2016 because of uncertainty about its ultimate use. In the spring of 2017 the City Manager appointed a Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Working Group to provide community input, and July the city retained PPS again to guide the process of finding appropriate uses for the kiosk and the plaza. “PPS will provide expertise in public space programming and community engagement around placemaking initiatives to the Working Group process and will work with City staff and the Working Group to develop recommendations for the use, governance, and operation of the Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza” (CDD website).

Meanwhile, on September 28, 2016 Commission staff received a petition requesting, “that the Cambridge Historical Commission initiate with all possible haste the process of designating the Harvard Square Kiosk as a protected landmark of the City of Cambridge.” The fifteen signatures on the original hard copy petition were verified by the Election Commission and a public hearing was scheduled for November 3. In addition to the submitted petition, an online petition was said to have ~~been signed by hundreds of others~~ received 1,300 signatures. At the hearing on November 3 numerous citizens expressed concern about the future of the kiosk. Despite reservations about the duplicative nature of landmarking a structure that was already protected by the Harvard Square Conservation District, the Commission voted 6-0 to initiate the study.

Historical Commission staff presented a draft landmark designation report at a public hearing on September 7, 2017. Several members of the public objected to the design approach represented by the Galante rendering; staff responded that the rendering merely illustrated how the building might look if all the 1983 alterations were removed. Others suggested that the south low wall be rebuilt as originally designed; favored preservation of the exterior pendant light fixtures; and advocated reinstallation of the original wire glass. Further discussion clarified that the designation would protect the kiosk in its present state, but that the designation report would identify inappropriate elements to guide future reviews. Interior features were not subject to Commission jurisdiction. The Kiosk and Plaza Working Group would help determine the future use of the building; the nature of the use would determine the architectural program for the kiosk. All those who testified supported landmark designation.

At the conclusion of the September 7 hearing the Commission continued the hearing until October 5 and solicited further comments from members of the public. Substantive comments about the designation report were submitted by Suzanne Blier, Marilee Meyer, and James Williamson.

- Suzanne Blier criticized the Commission for apparently accepting the Galante rendering as its vision of an appropriate redesign for the kiosk, and called for restoring “as much of [the kiosk’s] historic fabric and feel as possible – specifically the window mullions, lighting, and other historic interior and exterior features.”
- Marilee Meyer also criticized the Galante rendering, incorrectly assuming that it represented a favored design direction. She advocated preservation or reconstruction of the brick wall at the south elevation, the bead-board wooden ceiling, the copper dentil moulding, “the appropriate 1950s-60s industrial light fixtures,” the semi-circular “Harvard Square” signs, and the original vertically-divided glazing.
- James Williamson contributed a number of editorial comments on the draft, including specific language strengthening the guidelines in the areas of glazing, magazine racks, and ventilation equipment.

E. Area Description

The Harvard Square Kiosk occupies a site in the center of Harvard Square, one of three traditional business districts in the city; it lies between Harvard Yard on the east and commercial activities on the west and south. Historically, the kiosk occupied a small traffic island that it shared with a free-standing newsstand. During construction of the Red Line subway extension in 1978-84 the reconstructed kiosk was placed on a large new plaza adjacent to a new headhouse.

F. Planning Issues

The center of Harvard Square has long been an area of special planning concern. The following are among the many issues currently under discussion:

- Traffic and transportation issues traditionally dominated plans for Harvard Square proper, but the extension of the Red Line subway largely eliminated above-ground passenger transfers to buses and related street improvements eased traffic flow;
- Pedestrian issues have been addressed repeatedly, but some interfaces are awkwardly arranged;
- The physical limitations of the plaza, which was constructed in 1983, have been addressed in piecemeal fashion and are currently the subject of study. Awkward changes in grade, chaotic pedestrian flow patterns, conflicting activities, poor choices of materials, and (until recently) limited seating options are among the concerns;
- Public use of the plaza, including programming for community events;
- Future use of the kiosk, which has been operated as a newsstand since 1983. The decline of print media has meant that the operator sells a greater proportion of souvenirs and related products than before. The possibility of reprogramming the kiosk for other public or commercial uses is currently under study by the Community Development Department via the City Manager-appointed Kiosk and Plaza Working Group.

The most recent relevant study of planning issues around the kiosk is the *Harvard Square Vision Study* prepared by the Cambridge Community Development Department and the Harvard Square Business Association in 2014.

II. History

Harvard Square became a transportation hub soon after the opening of the West Boston (Longfellow) Bridge in 1793. This was the most direct route to Boston from towns to the west and northwest and drew traffic through Cambridge from western Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire. By the 1840s horse-drawn omnibuses were leaving the Square for Boston every fifteen minutes throughout the day. The introduction of horsecar service in 1854 reinforced this trend, and soon car lines from Newton, Waltham, Watertown and Arlington brought travelers to the Square. After electric streetcars were introduced in 1889 as many as 20,000 people changed cars on summer Sundays.

Planning for rapid transit, in the form of an elevated railway with a terminal on Mt. Auburn Street (to avoid disturbing Harvard Yard), began in 1897. The city rejected this idea, and in 1909 the Boston Elevated Railway (a private company) began work on a subway with a terminal station under Harvard Square. When construction ended three years later the press marveled at the new headhouse, which had been designed with the participation of an elite committee of local architects.



Harvard Square in 1912. The new headhouse was initially considered to be an ornament to the Square, but the design was hazardous to pedestrians and converging automobiles and streetcars. Library of Congress

The solid brick and granite structure was initially hailed for its dignified architecture, but it was soon perceived as a hazard for pedestrians and automobile traffic.⁴ The streetcar tracks on each side left little room for other traffic, drivers could not see vehicles approaching on converging streets, and pedestrians were left at risk by the absence of sidewalks. The Planning Board called it “unsightly, inconvenient, and extremely dangerous” (*Cambridge Tribune*, June 21, 1919). The Harvard Square Businessmen’s Association began calling for its removal in 1919, and asked the Cambridge firm of Newhall & Blevins “to prepare a plan reducing the size and height of the subway entrance so that people may look over the top and see what is going on on the opposite side” (*Cambridge Chronicle*, March 15, 1919).⁵ The City Council concurred and the legislature seemed sympathetic, but after an extensive engineering analysis the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU) found that it was impractical or impossible to build adequate entrances elsewhere. The DPU concluded that if the taxpayers of Cambridge wished to provide “a lighter or more perishable or a more beautiful structure” they should be allowed to do so, but neither the Commonwealth, the Elevated Company, nor its passengers should be burdened with the expense (*Chronicle*, Jan. 22, 1921).

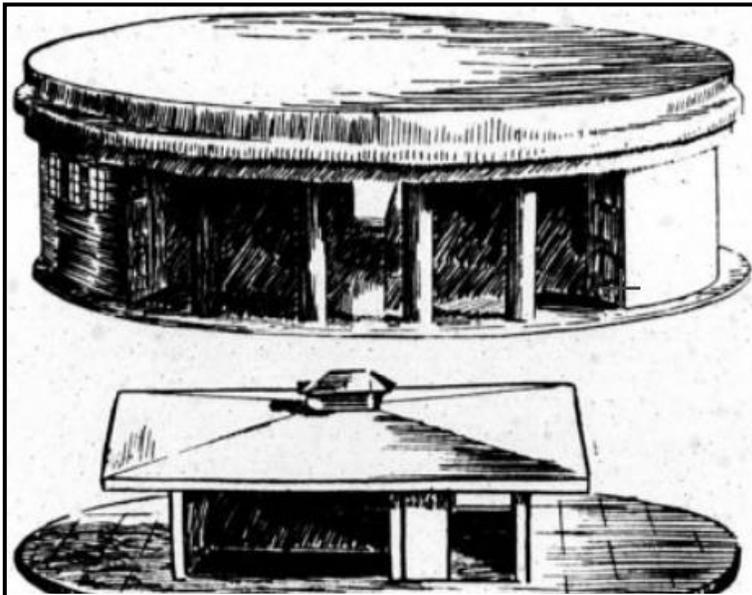
⁴ The function of a headhouse in this context is to provide weather protection for stairs leading to the station below.

⁵ This plan has not been found.

The idea of a more transparent replacement structure was discussed by the DPU in 1921, but the first practical plan for replacement of the kiosk came from Charles B. Breed (1875-1958), professor of railway and highway engineering at M.I.T., in a speech to the Harvard Square Business Men's Association in March 1925. Prof. Breed said the footprint of the station could be reduced by about 80%. He "proposed to tear the station down to the granite base and cover the decreased area by a canopy eight feet high at the eaves and 11 feet high at the peak" (*Chronicle*, March 21, 1925). At least one of the staircases would be covered with a concrete hatch that could be opened during days of peak travel. This would provide more room around the station and allow relocation of some of the car tracks. The Association then retained Breed to represent them in the design process.

On April 30, 1925 the legislature authorized the Department of Public Utilities to approve plans for a new headhouse. The city, which would also have to approve the plans, paid half the estimated cost of \$30,000 in advance; the Commonwealth then lent that sum to the Elevated Company so it could pay its share.

In July 1925 the Public Utilities Commission reviewed two models, one prepared by Prof. Breed and the other by the Elevated's engineering staff. Breed's model is illustrated below; a depiction of the Elevated's has not been found, but it was said to have had a considerably larger footprint, probably because the company wished to retain both original staircases. The commissioners asked Breed to return with an updated design that reflected some of the features of the company's model.



"Present structure and model designed by Professor H.C. Breed (sic)." Breed's original design appeared to retain only the escalator and one of the original station's two staircases. *Cambridge Tribune*. Aug. 1, 1925

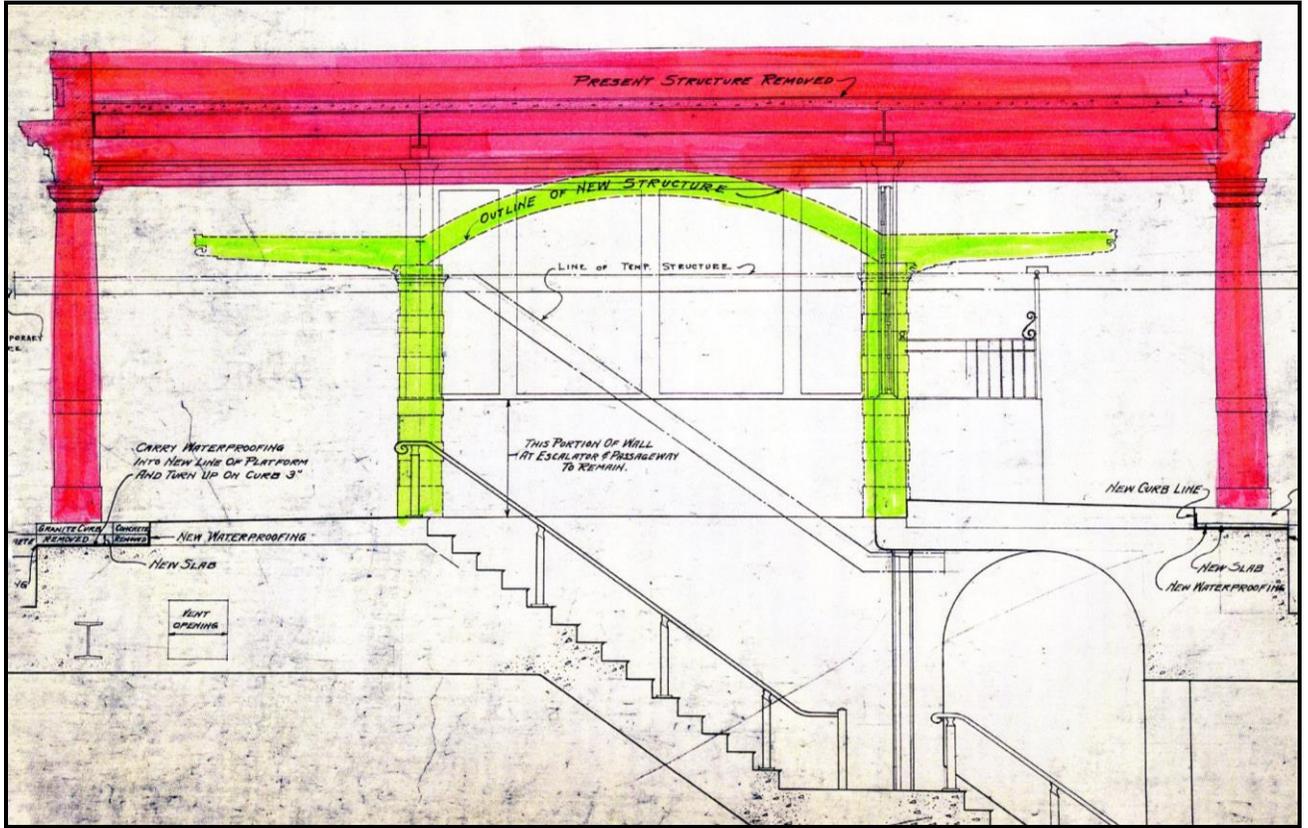
Breed's revised plan would have retained the granite walls around the two staircases and supported a canopy on eight concrete pillars "which would be the only obstruction to a clear view through the structure from all sides" (*Chronicle*, Oct. 25, 1925). The footprint of the proposed structure would be 17 by 25 feet. There would be no enclosed shelter for passengers. A rendering of this version has not been found.

The Public Utility Commissioners approved a design in the spring of 1926, but Mayor Edward Quinn, apparently dissatisfied, sought outside advice and did not send the appropriation to the City Council until August 1926. Construction followed a year later. On Oct. 21, 1927 the DPU awarded the contract to the Guiney & Hanson Construction

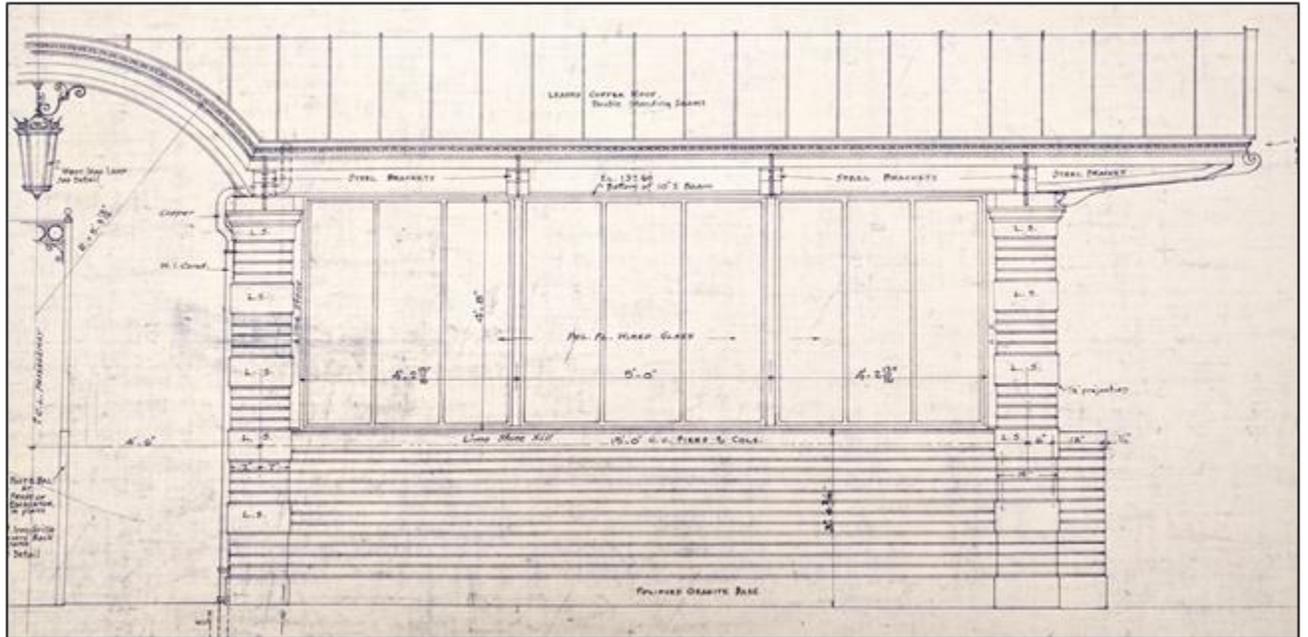
Company of Boston, which had bid \$15,950 and promised to complete the work within 90 days. Work started on November 21 and was completed in January 1928.

The final design of the headhouse displayed considerably more attention to architectural considerations than Breed's rudimentary shelter. The architectural firm of Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore refined the design and made it compatible with the Georgian Revival architecture that characterized most new buildings in Harvard Square in the early 20th century. Steel columns, rather than concrete pillars, were clad in alternating bands of dark waterstruck brick and limestone in a pattern that resembles several nearby gates of Harvard Yard. A thin, copper-clad roof comprised of intersecting barrel vaults replaced Breed's hip roof and ventilator. Wire glass panels filled the spaces between the

were built around them, defining the footprint of the new structure. The scale of the new kiosk was much smaller than the original, as can be seen on a sectional view.



Sectional view of the new and old kiosks, looking north and showing the original staircases. Green = outline of new structure; Pink = brick structure to be removed. BERY Collection, CHC



East Elevation, north side. Construction drawing, 1927

BERY Collection, CHC



Harvard Station on completion February 1928. This view shows the transparency desired by the proponents, already obscured by a taxi rank. BERY Collection, CHC

The new station received critical approval in the press. The *Boston Globe* complimented its “artistic appearance,” while the *Chronicle* noted that the replacement for the old “pillbox” was being called “the greenhouse” in recognition of its transparency (Feb. 12, 1928; March 9, 1928). Nevertheless agitation continued for complete removal of the headhouse. Spurred by a fatal bus accident in 1944, the state studied the cost of relocating the entrance away from the center of the Square, but found the \$1 million cost prohibitive.



The earliest known color image on the kiosk, June 1952. Note the red letters of the semi-circular sign. CHC

In 1962 the Metropolitan Transit Authority, which had succeeded the Elevated Company in 1947, announced plans to move the station to its Bennett Street yards in conjunction with the sale of 11 acres of land for private development; a covered transfer platform would eliminate buses from the center of the Square.⁶ An MTA official was quoted as saying that when this move was made “the city would be crazy if it didn’t wipe out the kiosk altogether” (*Chronicle*, Dec. 6, 1962).

By this time the cultural significance of the kiosk was beginning to be recognized. A 1962 headline referred to Harvard Square’s “famed kiosk” (*Globe*, Dec. 9, 1962). Opinions about the Square were decidedly mixed:

Many people at this time perceived Harvard Square as undistinguished, overburdened, obsolete, and chaotic. Architect Josep Lluís Sert, Harvard’s chief planner, warned an audience that “a few steps away, there is a gateway that opens to Harvard Square and like Dante’s door to hell, could carry over it the inscription ‘Abandon all hope,’ meaning all hope of finding these elements that make our environment human, because across the gate there is noise, disorder, lack of visual balance and harmony”. One journalist called the Square “an unmitigated mess” (*Boston Sunday Herald*, Dec. 11, 1966). Others found it cosmopolitan and charmingly eclectic, reflecting the debate between the prevailing planning orthodoxy of Corbusian Modernism and the humanistic principles espoused by Jane Jacobs. (*Building Old Cambridge*, 150).

At about the same time, British architecture critic Ian Nairn, writing in *The Observer Review*, stated an opposite view:

Hundreds of architects have labored in the last two centuries to make up the huge mass of buildings which is Harvard University. Yet, for me, the real triumph of the place is a newsstand and subway entrance just outside the university’s main gate.

Accident has created what deliberate design rarely seems able to achieve in urban planning, and a nation which elsewhere squanders land as though it were toilet paper has here produced an urban epigram in a tiny space. It looks dreary enough ... but it feels fine, and in all its tawdriness this is probably the most important space in Harvard (quoted in *Chronicle*, July 27, 1967).



Harvard Square in 1962, showing rooftop signs added in the 1940s.

Radcliffe College Archives

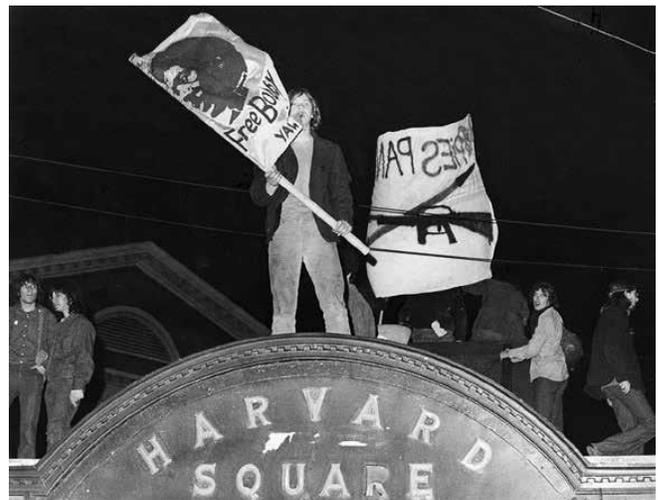
⁶ See *Building Old Cambridge: Architecture and Development*, pp. 158-162

During this period Harvard Square began to develop a bohemian culture based on its two dozen bookstores and lively music scene. The kiosk came to symbolize the Square to a national audience, so when it was threatened with destruction in the 1970s, it was not difficult to develop a consensus in favor of preservation. As a writer for the *Christian Science Monitor* put it, it was the kind of “unofficial, unsung landmark ... that suggest the traveler has arrived somewhere.”

Some of the famous and dangerous people of our time have darted in, out, and around it. The likes of John Updike and Edward Kennedy surfaced through its doors to enroll at Harvard. And it was here that Students for a Democratic Society chanted antiwar slogans. Wartime news ... was dispensed from the Out of Town News stand that snuggled up against its flank; in peacetime, street people leaned up against its walls to exchange counterculture word-of-mouth.



Ted Alevisos and Bill Wood accompany Joan Baez behind the kiosk, 1959. In the 1970s the Cambridge Arts Council sponsored bi-weekly rush hour concerts on the roof CHC



On April 15, 1970, antiwar protestors rioted in Harvard Square, setting fires and trashing storefronts despite a massive police presence. Boston Globe photo, CHC

The Bennett Street yards were preempted by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library about the same time that plans for the subway extension to Alewife Brook Parkway began to take shape in 1966. Harvard Square interests opposed plans to move the station entrance to Brattle Square or Flagstaff Park, and by the mid-1970s the MBTA had settled on a plan to extend the tunnel directly north under Massachusetts Avenue. This would have required demolishing much of the original station to construct new platforms under Flagstaff Park, and the Authority commissioned Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’s Chicago office to design a new station, headhouse, and surface improvements. In 1976 the Cambridge Historical Commission nominated the 1927-28 kiosk to the National Register of Historic Places, which effectively preserved it from demolition.⁷ The MBTA changed its plans and agreed to restore the kiosk as a store for Out of Town News. A much smaller headhouse than originally

⁷ Federally-funded projects that are determined to have an “adverse effect” on a Register property are subject to an arduous review that can cause delays of up to several years while alternatives are sought.

planned was built on the south side of the new plaza, near the entrance of the Cambridge Savings Bank.⁸



Second Out of Town Newsstand (1966)

Nick DeWolf photo, 1971



Third Out of Town Newsstand (1974) CHC photo, 1976

For many years an Out of Town News stand accompanied the kiosk on its traffic island. Founded by 23-year-old Sheldon Cohen in 1954, the company quickly built a succession of larger stands, culminating in a 1966 prefab that for a while sported an electronic zipper sign. The cultural significance of Out of Town News coincided with the postwar rise of print journalism and the increasing internationalization of Harvard and M.I.T. Cohen stocked 3,000 periodicals and newspapers from

forty countries; the stand was also a major outlet for the New York Times (along with other major papers from around the country) when that paper was not widely sold in the Boston area.

The adaptive reuse of the kiosk to accommodate Out of Town News was an obvious move. The newsstand kept growing and overwhelmed the small traffic island that the two structures shared.

⁸ In deference to the bank the height of the new headhouse was kept as low as possible and it was depressed below the grade of the surrounding sidewalks, creating the infamous "Pit."

With preservation of the kiosk now mandated, combining the two opened up desirable space and supported the polished brick-and-granite aesthetic of the new landscape.

The kiosk remained in place during the first two years of subway construction, but in February 1981 the roof was removed and the masonry elements were numbered, dismantled, and placed in storage. Once the station was completed the structure was rebuilt and the restored copper roof reinstalled in June 1984. Aluminum-framed windows replaced the old wire glass, news racks filled the staircase openings, and a cashier's booth appeared in the old escalator passage, but the original masonry and roof were reinstalled with only minor alterations.

The city executed a twenty-year lease with Out of Town News in 1983, but in 1994 Cohen sold the business to Hudson County News, Inc., a New Jersey firm. A few years later, a manager said "the bottom has just fallen out" of the business (*Globe*, Sept. 29, 1999). Customers could no longer justify traveling to Harvard Square to pay up to \$10 for an outdated foreign newspaper when they could find it online for free. Sales of the *Boston Globe* and the *New York Times* had fallen by 75% since the early 1990s. Hudson gave up the lease, and in 2009 the Muckey Corporation took over the property. Muckey diversified its product line to include cigarettes and souvenirs, but retained as many foreign publications as it could profitably sell. As of August 1, 2017, either party may terminate the lease upon the provision of 60 days' notice in writing to the other. The lease terminates on January 31, 2019 with no option to extend beyond that date.



Sheldon Cohen commemorated his new store with a ceramic model of the kiosk that played a Harvard fight song when the lid was lifted.

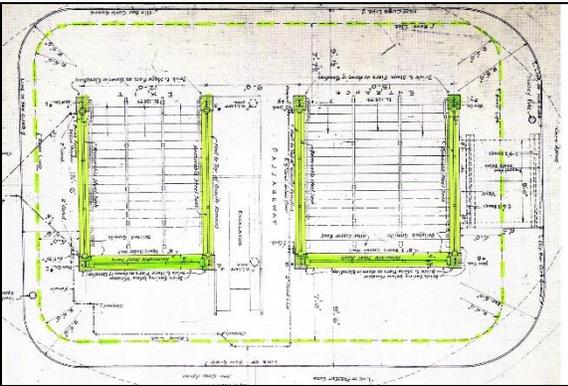
III. Description

The Harvard Square Kiosk incorporated the stairs and escalator of the original headhouse of 1912. Designed by Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore and constructed in 1927-28, the new kiosk had thin piers of alternating waterstruck brick and limestone in a pattern similar to that of several Harvard Yard gates nearby. The piers supported a thin copper roof of shallow, intersecting barrel vaults supported on a riveted iron framework. Between the roof and the low brick perimeter walls the entire structure was glazed so as to be transparent to converging traffic. The perimeter walls enclosed three sides of each stairway; the fourth side, facing the Coop, was open to the staircases down to the station. The two staircases were separated by an escalator and a passageway.



Harvard Square Kiosk, 1938

Boston Elevated Railway (BERY) Collection, CHC



Original plan; perimeter walls in green.



East elevation, ca. 1955

Both CHC



Kiosk and Out of Town Newsstand, 1961

CHC



Kiosk and proposed plaza, 1978 (model)

SOM Chicago

The current configuration of the kiosk dates from the construction of the Red Line Extension in 1978-84. Initial plans to raze the structure were thwarted when the Cambridge Historical Commission nominated it to the National Register of Historic Places, and the MBTA directed the architects of the station and the surface improvements, the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, to preserve the building. The Massachusetts Historical Commission agreed to adaptive reuse of the kiosk as a newsstand. Project architect Edward Tsoi prepared detailed plans for dismantling and reconstruction, and in 1981 the structure was removed and stored while most of the station below was demolished. In 1984 the kiosk was reconstructed a short distance from its original site using the salvaged brick and limestone and copper roof. Sections of the interior walls were removed, and a cashier's booth and doors were inserted in the former passageway between the stairs. Magazine racks were inserted in the staircase openings, and the south wall was modified to accept two additional doors (never used) and a vent for the heating system. Period-appropriate pendant lights were added under the roof overhang. No significant changes to the building have been made since 1990.



West elevation, 1977, [showing roof edge dentil detail](#)

CHC



South and west elevations, 2016

CHC



North and west elevations, 2016, showing pendant light fixtures installed in 1990

CHC



South and east elevations, 2016

CHC

The kiosk currently shows the effects of many years of deferred maintenance. Investigations led by the Cambridge Department of Public Works in 2015-16 found that the copper roof had reached the end of its useful life and needed replacement. Leaks had damaged some of the cypress tongue-and-groove sheathing, but the iron structure was found to be intact. Some glass panes had broken and not been replaced. The masonry was dirty, but generally in sound condition. Heating and cooling equipment was outdated and inefficient. An investigation of the floor found that the kiosk sits on an unventilated crawl space partially filled with water, probably air conditioning condensate. There is a water supply but no drains; installing drainage to a sanitary sewer would be extremely difficult.

IV. Significance of the Property

The Harvard Square Kiosk is significant for its architecture and method of construction, and for its associations with the urban development of Cambridge in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is a rare and distinctive example of a specialized early twentieth-century transportation structure. The building is intimately associated with the development and character of its surroundings. The building is also significant for its important associations with Prof. Charles B. Breed and architects Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore. It is also significant as an early example of adaptive reuse, although the design by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill-Chicago is less than fifty years old.

V. Relationship to Criteria

A. Article III, Chapter 2.78.180 a.

The enabling ordinance for landmarks states:

The Historical Commission by majority vote may recommend for designation as a landmark any property within the City being or containing a place, structure, feature or object which it determines to be either (1) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or

events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth or (2) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of its period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures . . .

B. Relationship of Property to Criteria

The former Harvard Square Kiosk meets landmark criterion (1) for its important associations with the architectural, cultural, and economic history of the City. The property also meets criterion (2) as a unique example of its type in Cambridge and for its association with important architects and engineers, including the firm of Blackall, Clap & Whittemore and Prof. Charles B. Breed.

VI. Recommendations

A. Purpose of Designation

Article III, Chapter 2.78.140 states the purpose of landmark designation:

preserve, conserve and protect the beauty and heritage of the City and to improve the quality of its environment through identification, conservation and maintenance of . . . sites and structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose; [and] to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such . . . structures . . .

B. Preservation Options

The former Harvard Square Kiosk is already protected by its listing on the National Register of Historic Places and by its location within the Harvard Square Conservation District. ~~Designation as a landmark will have mostly symbolic value, although the suggested review guidelines will focus~~ The guidelines established by the landmark designation will provide a specific context for discussion about the appropriateness of any proposed changes. The only other possible preservation option would be designation of the kiosk ~~as a single building historic district~~ under M.G.L. Ch. 40C, but this would add little to its protected status.

C. Staff Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Commission find that the former Harvard Square Kiosk meets the criteria for landmark designation and forward this report and the attached Order to the City Council.

VII. Standards and Criteria

Under Article III, the Historical Commission is charged with reviewing any construction, demolition or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features (other than color) of a designated landmark. This section of the report describes exterior architectural features that are among the characteristics that led to consideration of the property as a landmark. Except as the order designating or amending the landmark may otherwise provide, the exterior architectural features described in this report should be preserved and/or enhanced in any proposed alteration or construction that affects

those features of the landmark. The standards following in paragraphs A and B of this section provide guidelines for the treatment of the landmark described in this report.

A. General Standards and Criteria

Subject to review and approval of exterior architectural features under the terms of this report, the following standards shall apply:

1. Significant historic and architectural features of the landmark should be preserved.
2. Changes and additions to the landmark which have taken place over time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. ~~The adaptive reuse by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill-Chicago is less than fifty years old, but these changes may be judged to have acquired significance in their own right. Alterations that erase evidence of the adaptive reuse should be considered in light of the extent to which they reveal the original structure and recover its transparency.~~
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced unless doing so will compromise the integrity of the structure.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the original material in physical properties, design, color, texture, and appearance. The use of imitation replacement materials is generally discouraged.
6. The surface cleaning of a landmark should be done by the gentlest possible means. Sand-blasting or other abrasive cleaning methods may be used only on iron components, never on wood or masonry.
7. Additions should not destroy significant exterior architectural features and should be recognizable as new architectural elements, without compromising the original building's historic aspects, architectural significance, or the distinct character of the landmark, neighborhood, and environment.
8. Additions should be designed in a way that, if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landmark would be unimpaired.

B. Suggested Review Guidelines

1. Site Development.

There appears to be little or no further as-of-right potential for development on the site. Further enclosure or additions to the footprint or roof of the building should not be allowed.

2. Exterior Alterations

Review of exterior alterations should reflect two fundamental principles: that all original material that remained after the conversion to a newsstand in 1983 should be preserved to the greatest extent possible, and that there should be no additional enclosure of the structure. The adaptive reuse by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill-Chicago is less than fifty years old, but some changes may be judged

to have acquired significance in their own right. Alterations that erase evidence of the adaptive reuse may be permissible if they reveal the original structure and recover its transparency and character.

a. Exterior surfaces

Exterior materials should be preserved insofar as practicable, except when approved for replacement. Special care should be taken to protect and maintain the brick and limestone masonry. Repointing the mortar joints should be done only as required, and with special care to maintain the strength, color and texture of the mortar and the profile of the joints. Reconstruction of a continuous low wall across the south elevation is strongly encouraged.

b. Roof

The standing seam copper of the roof should be replaced in kind, duplicating the original details as shown on the 1927 construction drawings; if replacement of the perimeter dentilled fascia is required it must duplicate the original. The iron supporting framework should be cleaned to remove rust and accumulated paint layers and repainted in the historic color, to be determined by technical analysis. The cypress sheathing should be replaced in kind only where necessary, and painted as above. Paint and rust removal should be accomplished by the gentlest means available to avoid damage to historic materials. Insulation, if required, should be installed as a thin layer between the sheathing and the copper roof.

c. Fenestration

The existing fenestration was installed during conversion to a newsstand in 1983. Replacement fenestration should respect the original design to the extent consistent with the original design intent as a transparent structure and the structure's intended use. While recognizing the challenge of finding suitable materials, restoration of the original wire glass should be considered along with the thin dimensions of the original mullions. Accordion-style windows are likely to have unacceptably-wide frames and jambs. Replacement-Removal of the magazine racks that fill the traditional staircase openings with glazing is encouraged, while giving consideration to the possibility of some continuing newspaper and magazine display.

~~d. Interior features~~

~~Although interior features are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Cambridge Historical Commission, the owner should be encouraged to preserve original (1927-28) structural materials and surfaces. Alterations from the adaptive reuse project of 1983 should be removed to recover the original transparency of the building.~~

~~e.d. Utilities~~

Utilities (heating, air conditioning, ~~ventilation~~lighting) should be redesigned for greater efficiency to minimize exterior alterations/intrusions. ~~Utilization of the 1983 vents on the south elevation should be considered.~~ Consider remote condenser placement if air conditioning is required.

e. Lighting

Facility lighting fixtures should be period-appropriate; reuse or replication of the 1990 pendant fixtures is encouraged. Architectural lighting fixtures should be discreet. Light sources should be concealed and the amount of light should not be distracting.

f. Signs

The back-lit semi-circular “Harvard Square” signs are significant early features of the building and should be restored with vacuum-formed translucent red letters matching the originals. The excessive commercial advertising clutter and signage should not be viewed as a significant feature of the structure to be protected. Notwithstanding the “8 Minutes to Park Street” signs that were present on the roof in the 1950s and ’60s, rooftop signs should be discouraged.

3. Interior Features

Although interior features are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Cambridge Historical Commission, any new adaptive reuse should preserve original (1927-28) structural materials and surfaces, including the exposed beadboard sheathing and riveted iron structure of the roof and the masonry piers and walls. The present brick floor is continuous with the plaza pavement and should remain so. The interior casework should be preserved only where appropriate for the new use; if possible, new casework should be no higher than the brick perimeter walls.

VIII. Proposed City Council Order

ORDERED:

That the Harvard Square Kiosk, 0 Harvard Square, Cambridge, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on [...]. The premises so designated includes Parcel 2 on Assessor's map 159 plus the area of pavement extending ten feet beyond the drip line of the building's roof.

This designation is justified by the important architectural and historical associations of the premises with the development of Harvard Square, and for its association with important architects and engineers, including the firm of Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore and Prof. Charles B. Breed.

The effect of this designation shall be that review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability shall be required before any construction activity can take place within the designated premises or any action can be taken affecting the appearance of the premises, that would in either case be visible from a public way. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the Final Landmark Designation Report, dated [...], with respect to the designated premises, by Section VII, Standards and Criteria of said report, and by the applicable sections of Chapter 2.78, Article III, of the Cambridge Municipal Code.

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